Shankara's Date – A Discussion on Sudhanva's Copper Plate

The article *'Sankara's Date: Paradigm for Scrutiny of Biographical and Epigraphic Data'* by Dr. V. N. Muthukumar and V. Subrahmanian contains an examination of the evidential value of what are said to be Sudhanvan's copper-plate inscription and verses of the *Brhat Sankara Vijaya* about Bhagavatpada's advent.

Sri Sunil Bhattacharyaji has written with reference to the article:

What is disturbing, is that the king Sudhanva has been mentioned in the biography of Adi Shankara by no less than a person like Swami Vidyaranya. That is why we cannot just dismiss the existence of Sudhanva in the times of Adi Shankara.

Authors' Response:

We definitely have regard for the *Madhaviya Shankara Vijaya* and have not dismissed the possibility of a king named Sudhanvan having existed in Bhagavatpada's time. We have only said, strictly with reference to what is claimed about Sudhanvan in the copper-plate inscription as presented in *Vimarsha*, "As for historical evidence, there is none at all till now that corroborates the position that there actually was an emperor in India named Sudhanvan who ruled in the 5th century B.C." The position of the *Tarka-shastra* is that the statement, "There is no '*dandi purushah* (man-with-staff)' here" would hold even if there were, in front of one, just a man, just a staff or even a man with a staff nearby and would be false only if there were a man with a staff. Accordingly, our statement would be wrong only if there is historical evidence to corroborate what is made known in the inscription that: (a) there existed an *emperor* (*sarvabhauma*) – not just a king – named Sudhanvan in Bhagavatpada's time and (b) this suzerain ruled in the 5th century BC (the inscription being dated *Yudhishthira-shaka* 2663, that is, 476 BC). We have used the phrase 'historical evidence' in the unremarkable sense of 'evidence of past events or persons that can be verified to a reasonable standard of certainty'.

The author of *Vimarsha*, the source of the contents of the inscription, has, after presenting the said contents, written (on page 32 of *Vimarsha*), "That there was indeed a great king Sudhanvan who was a chief disciple of Bhagavatpada is known from the (*Madhaviya Shankara*) *Digvijaya* [Translated from Sanskrit]" That he was referring to the *Madhaviya Shankara Vijaya* is unmistakeable, for he has followed this sentence by quoting in full a verse from it about Sudhanvan. Thus, the author of *Vimarsha* has presented the *Madhaviya Shankara Viyaya* as evidence for the existence of a king and contemporary of Bhagavatpada named Sudhanvan. Sri Bhattacharya too has here deemed the *Madhaviya* to be an authoritative work and evidence for Sudhanvan's existence.

The *Madhaviya Sankara Vijaya* nowhere says that Sudhanvan was an *emperor*. On the contrary, by speaking of a king of Kerala (who is said to have presented his dramas to Bhagavatpada), King Amaruka (whose body Bhagavatpada occupied for a while) and the king of Vidarbha (who is presented as a king like Sudhanvan and not as one subservient to the latter), it falsifies the categorical claim in the copper-plate inscription about Sudhanvan being an emperor ruling over the entire *Bharata-varsha*. (Since the inscription purports to be a devoted submission by Sudhanvan to his esteemed preceptor, Bhagavatpada, this falsification cannot be explained away by claiming that the king had just greatly exaggerated his status.)

Further, the *Madhaviya Shankara Vijaya* does not in any way mention or even hint that Bhagavatpada lived in the 5th century BC. On the contrary, a scholar versed in astrology had, even decades ago, ascertained and pointed out that the astrological information in Verse 2.71 of the *Madhaviya* that at the time of Bhagavatpada's birth, the Sun, Saturn, Jupiter and Mars were all in *kendra* and in exaltation (*ucca*) is incompatible with Bhagavatpada having been born (on *vaisakha-shukla-panchami* at Kalady) *in any year* of the sixth and fifth centuries before Christ. Thus, if the *Madhaviya Shankara Vijaya* is deemed to be authoritative and an evidence for there having been a king named Sudhanvan in Bhagavatpada's time, then the copper-plate inscription must be dismissed as undependable for, according to the inscription, Sudhanvan and Bhagavatpada were alive in the 5th century before Christ (in 476 BC).

Thus, anybody who deems the *Madhaviya* to be authoritative and an evidence for there having been a king named Sudhanvan in Bhagavatpada's time should (unless he wants to eat the cake and have it too ☺) concede, on the basis of the Madhaviya itself, that the copper-plate inscription spoken of in *Vimarsha* is untrustworthy.

In any case, even if there existed, as mentioned in the *Madhaviya*, a king and Bhagavatpada's follower named Sudhanvan, it does not follow – and certainly not from the *Madhaviya* – that this Sudhavan submitted to Bhagavatpada a copper-plate inscription, and that too one with (as demonstrated in our article) false, grandiose claims about his suzerainty, a false declaration about there being universal, punctilious adherence to *varnashrama-dharma* in his kingdom and unsound reasons for Bhagavatpada choice of the heads of two of his four Maths.

(Sri Sunil Bhattacharyaji has written:)
Secondly, I understand that the Archaeological survey of India (Baroda Office) says that the copper-plate inscription has been retained by the Dwaraka peeth authorities, but it doubts the authenticity of the inscription.

Response:

This information is factually incorrect. The ascertained facts are that the said copper-plate inscription was *never* made even temporarily available to the ASI and was never even so much as just shown to any expert even in the premises of the Math. Consequently, the ASI never concluded that the copper-plate inscription was authentic or that it was unauthentic or that it was of doubtful authenticity.

(Sri Sunil Bhattacharyaji has written:)
On top of it , there has been the report of a split in the Dwarka peeth in 1880 and that was followed by another spit at a later date. This complicates matters as the properties of the Peeth could have been distributed among the split units and the Copper-plate inscription may now be with one of the branches of the Dwarka peeth.

Response:

(1) Centuries ago, when Muslim invasion of Kathiawar was imminent, the then pontiff of the Dwaraka Math shifted to Mulbagal in Karnataka, and, establishing a Math, settled there; as for the institution at Dwaraka, it became defunct and remained headless for long [vide, for example, *Sri Shankaracharya va tyancha sampradaya* (Marathi) by Mahadev Rajararam Bodas, 1923, page 50; *Sri-Shankaracharya-caritam* (Sanskrit) by (Vidvan) Venkatachala Sharma, 1916, pp. 30-31 (Preface

to *Brahmasutra-bhashya* with *Bhamati*, *Nyayanirnaya* and *Ratnaprabha*)]. If the copper plate under consideration did exist in the Dwaraka Math at that time, it would, in view of its significance, irreplaceability and easy portability have almost certainly been taken by the pontiff to Mulbagal. However, it has never been identified in Mulbagal. In 1945, the head of the Mulbagal Math, Sri Abhinava Saccidananda Tirtha, was installed as the Shankaracharya of the Dwaraka Math. If the copper plate had been present in the Mulbagal Math, it is implausible that even he would have been unable to access it at all. Likewise, if the copper-plate were at Dwaraka, it is quite unlikely that it would have been totally untraceable even by him. Yet, at no time in the long period of over three decades between his taking over at Dwaraka in 1945 and his passing away in 1982 did the copper-plate ever come to light and that too in spite of earnest requests for information about it by different persons and in spite of doubts raised by sceptics in writing itself not only about the reliability of the inscription but even about whether such a copper plate ever existed. It would, therefore, be unrealistic to expect the copper plate to be currently lying unfound at either Mulbagal or the Dwaraka Math.

(2) Sri Rajarajeshvara Shankara Ashrama, the author of *Vimarsha*, took up the position of Shankaracharya of the Dwaraka Math in *Vikrama* 1935 (1878 AD). According to Bodas (1923), "About 40 years ago, Sri Rajarajeshvara took *samnyasa* from one Keshava Ashrama who abided in the Dwaraka Math and then comported himself as the Shankaracharya of the *Sharada-pitha* (Dwaraka) [Freely rendered into English from Marathi]." According to Venkatachala Sharma (1916), Sri Rajarajeshvara was a South Indian Brahmin who, as a youth, had studied the *Tarka-shastra* to an extent and knew some English. When he went to Dwaraka, he saw that the Math had no formal head and became desirous of becoming its pontiff. He took up *samnyasa*, won the approval of the authority there and became the Shankaracaraya of Dwaraka. In his highly eulogistic account about Sri Rajarajeshvara, Vishnu Shastri has written in his preface to *Vimarsha* (pp. 1-2) that Sri Rajarajeshvara was from the Godavari District of Andhra, his name was Jagannatha Shastri and he learnt the *Veda* from his father. At the age of 21, he, who was a bachelor, set out on a pilgrimage, visited Kanchipuram, Rameswaram, Ujjain, Panchavati (Nasik), etc. and expounded the scriptures at various places. Then, "He enthusiastically arrived at Dwaraka. He had the *darshan* of Dwarakadhish (Krishna) and the *Sharada-pitha's* head [Sri Keshava Ashrama; not named]. The preceptor honoured him with words full of regard and affection with the primary aim that the latter ascend the *pitha*. Revering the preceptor's instruction, when the *Guru's* death was at hand, he took up *samnyasa* in the prescribed manner and duly ascended the seat of Bhagavatpada, being entreated by the important persons of the town to do so. He who had become Rajarajeshvara Shankara Ashrama and the *Jagadguru* of the pre-eminent *Sharada-pitha* was respected by the Gaekwad king of Baroda (in whose jurisdiction Dwaraka falls) and by other rulers, such as of Saurashtra [Freely translated from Sanskrit with some hyperbole omitted]." Sri Rajarajeshvara is the one and only source to date in respect of the existence and the contents of Sudhanvan's copper-plate inscription.

Prior to presenting the contents of the copper-plate inscription, Sri Rajarajeshvara has declared in his *Vimarsha* (on page 29), "As regards this (the period of Bhagavatpada), the very definitive copper-plate inscription of Sudhavan which is an incontrovertible, unequivocal guide to the period of Bhagavan Bhashyakara (Bhagavatpada) is reproduced here [Translated from Sanskrit]." Then, immediately after presenting the contents of the inscription, he has asserted (on page 31), "From this edict, we come to the conclusion that exactly as stated therein, with the agreement of Sudhanvan and other primary disciples, Bhagavan Bhashyakara ordained as pontiff, Sri Totakacarya in the Jyotir Math, Sri Hastamalakacarya in Sringagiri (Sringeri), Sri Padmapadacarya in the Govardhana Pitha (at Puri) and the Vartikakara Sri Sureshvaracarya in the *Sharada-pitha* in Dwaraka and that…" Sri Rajarajeshvara has thus strongly indicated to his readers that the copper plate existed and was

accessible to him when he penned *Vimarsha*. At the close of *Vimarsha*, he has specified that he completed it in *Vikrama* 1953 (1896 AD) and as per the title-page, the book was published with the right of republication vested in the author, in *Vikrama* 1955 (1898 AD). So, unless he chose to mislead his readers, the copper plate must have been available to him in the late 1890s and, thus, it cannot be rightly presumed that the copper plate passed on in the 1880s to some separated branch of the Dwaraka Math and remains undiscovered there.

Vishnu Shastri has written in his preface to *Vimarsha* (pp. 2-3) that for some time after becoming the Shankaracharya, Sri Rajarajeshvara remained in Dwaraka. Then, "He left Dwaraka and travelled to Jamnagar, Bhavnagar, Ahmadabad, Baroda, Udaipur, Indore, Ujjain, Bhopal, Gwalior, Agra, Mathura, Delhi, Lahore, Kashmir, Haridwar, Bareilly, Lucknow, Ayodhya, Patna, Navadvipa (Nabadvip in Bengal), Deoghar and such other centres and engaged in discussions about right and wrong with the rulers there. He has been honoured by scholars on account of his scholarliness and austerity and is being served well by all. He has been successfully touring India till today." Thus, as per this account, Sri Rajarajeshvara set out from Dwaraka some time after taking up the position of Shankarachara (in 1878) and was still touring when he completed *Vimarsha* (in 1896). Sri Rajarajeshvara has himself written at the close of *Vimarsha* (on page 89) that he was on tour and camping at Moradabad at that time. So, unless what he wrote about the copper plate is fictitious, he must have obtained it at Dwaraka prior to the 1880s and had access to it even when he was on tour in the late 1890s. It follows that the copper plate could not have passed on to some separated branch Math in the 1880s and be lying undiscovered there.

Sri Rajarajeshvara was not from the line at Mulbagal, never went there and, reports Bodas (1923), "There was a extended dispute between Sacchidananda Tirtha of Mulbagal and Rajarajeshvara of Dwaraka; Swami Krishnananda and the others who mediated decided in favour of Mulbagal" Thus, there is no question of his having obtained the copper plate in or from Mulbagal. So, if, as indicated by him, the copper plate was actually available to him, it could not have been lying at Mulbagal and ought to have been located at Dwaraka. However, this would mean that (a) the copper plate had, incredibly, remained undestroyed, undamaged and unappropriated even when the Krishna Temple as also the town of Dwaraka was plundered and vandalized by, for instance, Mohammad Ghazni in the 11th century and Mehmud Begarha in the 15th century; (b) notwithstanding the copper plate's significance, irreplaceability and easy portability, it was, quite inexplicably, ditched at Dwaraka and not taken to Mulbagal when the Shankaracharya of Dwaraka shifted to and settled down in Mulbagal many years before Sri Rajarajeshvara's time; and (c) though the Dwaraka Math was, after the shift to Mulbagal, defunct and headless for long, the copper plate was, remarkably, not taken away by anyone and remained intact and accessible to Sri Rajarajeshvara when he came there in the late 19th century. Moreover, even if there did exist a copper-plate inscription of Sudhanvan belonging to the 5th century BC and it was, incredibly, found intact at Dwaraka by Sri Rajarajeshvara, it would still be a mystery how the inscription on it could have been understood by him. This is because if the inscription really belonged to the 5th century BC, it would have been in an ancient (Brahmi?) script and it was never shown to any expert capable of deciphering it. In view of all this, unless one is willing to unconditionally believe him, one may wonder whether he actually ever came across the copper plate under consideration. Of course, if even he, the only source to date about the copper plate's existence and contents, had, unlike what he has indicated, never personally come across the copper plate, then there would be no reason for anyone to even speculate that since the 1880s, it is lying unfound in some branch of the Dwaraka Math.

(3) Sri Rajarajeshvara passed away about two years after publishing *Vimarsha*, in *Vikrama* 1957 (1900 AD), in the month of *Ashadha*, on *shukla-pancami*. While he did not nominate any successor, his disciple Sri Madhava Tirtha was chosen by the Baroda State (which had jurisdiction over Dwaraka) to be the next Shankaracharya of Dwaraka and he was formally installed, a few months after Sri Rajarajeshvara's demise, as pontiff, in *Vikrama* 1958 (1901 AD), in the month of *Pushya*, on the full-moon day. Sri Madhava Tirtha remained the undisputed Shankaracharya till his death at Dakore on 27th September, 1916 (*Vikrama* 1972, in the month of *Bhadrapada*, on the new-moon day). It was after his passing away that legal succession-disputes arose, involving multiple claimants. There is, however, evidence that the copper plate, if at all it ever existed, was unobtainable even in Sri Madhva Tirtha's time. So its unavailability is not some aftermath of those disputes.

A court case was filed by Sri Madhava Tirtha against a monk, Sri Madhusudana Parvata, to restrain the latter from calling himself the Shankaracharya of the Jyotir Math; to restrain him from touring and accepting offerings from devotees in Gujarat; and to order him to give up to the Dwaraka Math what all had been donated to him in Gujarat. Sri Madhava Tirtha contended that as the Shankaracharya of Dwaraka he alone and not any other Shankaracharya had jurisdiction over this area. For his case, he needed to provide evidence to the court that such territorial rights existed for the Shankaracharya of Dwaraka. To this end, he submitted a Mathamnaya (a text specifying the norms for Bhagavatpada's Maths) but this was countered by Sri Madhusudana Parvata who submitted another Mathamnaya wherein exclusive territorial boundaries for the Shankaracharyas of Dwaraka, Jyotirmath, Puri and Sringeri were not prescribed. If the copper plate inscription as described by Sri Rajarajesvara had been available in his time, Sri Madhava Tirtha would undoubtedly have presented it or an authenticated copy of it, for it would have constituted a unique and incontrovertible evidence in favour of his claim of territorial jurisdiction. The pertinent portion of the inscription as translated and presented in our article is: "In this way, the four quarters of *bharata-varsa* (India) were placed by you under the stewardship of four preceptors. May these preceptors, guarding over their respective dominions uninterruptedly, cause the Vedic way to shine in splendour. Every one of us - *brahmanas*, *ksatriyas* and others - who dwell in a realm, shall remain subject to the authority of the corresponding preceptor [Diacritical marks present in the article are omitted here]." Sri Madhava Tirtha, however, failed to submit the copper plate or even an authenticated copy of the inscription; did not succeed in establishing that the Shankaracharya of Dwaraka had exclusive jurisdiction over Gujarat; and lost the case, with costs.

Here are some extracts (with our clarifications added in curly brackets) from the Judgement of Basil Scott, the Chief Justice of the Bombay High court ['Madhusudan Parvat vs Sree Madhav Teerth on 11 November, 1908']:

1. The plaintiff {Sri Madhava Tirtha} brought this suit for the declaration that the defendant {Sri Madhusudana Parvata}…is not entitled to call for or receive any offerings from the people of Ahmadabad and other places in Gujerat {sic} either in his assumed capacity of a Shankaracharya or of a Shankaracharya of the Jotir {sic} Math or a branch of that Math, for an account of the money received by the defendant as a Shankaracharya in Gujerat with a decree for payment to the plaintiff {Sri Madhava Tirtha} of the sum found to have been so received by the defendant {Sri Madhusudana Parvata}… The Subordinate Judge made a declaration that the defendant {Sri Madhusudana Parvata} is not entitled… to claim or receive offerings from the Judicial district of Ahmadabad in his assumed capacity of a Shankaracharya of the Jotir Math or the so-called branch of it at Dholka… From the decree of the Subordinate Judge the defendant {Sri Madhusudana Parvata} has appealed to this Court… 5. It is claimed on behalf of the defendant {Sri Madhusudana Parvata} that his predecessor in 1872 established or re-established the Jotir Math at Dholka…6. The establishment of the Math at Dholka, followed by visitations and

preaching by its Mohunt {Mahant, head} in various parts of Gujerat… soon aroused opposition from the Mohunt of the Sharada Math {of Dwaraka}. 7. The opposition was based on practical as well as sentimental grounds…the attraction of followers to the Dholka Math involved the withdrawal of probable or possible donors of offerings from the Dwarka Mohunt. In order to put a stop to the competition of the Dholka Mohunt, the plaintiff {Sri Madhava Tirtha}, in 1887, with the concurrence of his preceptor {Sri Rajarajeshvara Shankara Ashrama}, the then Mohunt of the Dwarka Math, filed a criminal complaint at Siddhpur against Raj Rajeswaranand {Sri Madhusudana Parvata's *Guru*}, the then head of the Dholka Math, charging him with cheating by personating the Shankaracharya of the Jotir Math. This complaint was dismissed… 8. The present suit is the first attempt made in a civil court to challenge the right of the occupant of the Dholka Math to preach as a Shankaracharya in Gujerat. 9. It is contended on the plaintiff's {Sri Madhava Tirtha's} behalf that he has, throughout that part of India where Gujerati {sic} is spoken, the exclusive privilege of preaching as Shankaracharya and receiving the offerings of Shankar {Bhagavatpada}. This contention is based on certain versions of the Mathamnaya or traditional precepts of the Maths produced by some of the plaintiff's {Sri Madhava Tirtha's} witnesses. 10. There is no authoritative version of the Mathamnaya and witnesses for the defendant {Sri Madhusudana Parvata} have produced other versions of it which differ in material particulars from those relied upon by the plaintiff {Sri Madhava Tirtha}. Thus the plaintiff's versions after prescribing certain territorial limits for each Math contain the following precepts (see Exhibit 335, paragraphs 25 and 26), "The head preceptors should never enter into each other's territories, that is the rule. Good rules would be violated by transgression, of the boundaries. It gives rise to an abode of quarrels; one should avoid that." The defendant's {Sri Madhusudana Parvata's} versions do not contain these precepts nor any definition, of territorial limits…12. It is clear from the above references that the plaintiff {Sri Madhava Tirtha} has not succeeded in proving any exclusive and unbroken customary privilege for himself and his predecessors to preach and receive offerings as Shankaracharyas in Gujerat… 12…The appearance of the defendant {Sri Madhusudana Parvata} and his predecessors as Shankaracharyas in Gujerat may have affected the prestige as preachers of the heads {such as Sri Madhava Tirtha} of the Sharada Math {of Dwaraka} but for interference with a mere dignity no suit can be maintained… 14…We allow the appeal {of Sri Madhusudana Parvata}, set aside the decree {of the Subordinate Judge in favour of Sri Madhava Tirtha}, and dismiss the suit with costs on the plaintiff {Sri Madhava Tirtha}.

From the judgement, it is patent that it was in 1887 itself, in the time of and with the concurrence of his *Guru*, Sri Rajarajeshvara Shankara Ashrama, that Sri Madhava Tirtha first filed a case against then head of the Dholka Math. While this was before *Vimarsha* was completed, the case against Sri Madhusudana Parvata concluded only in 1908, about a decade after the completion of *Vimarsha*. It is striking that not only did Sri Madhava Tirtha fail to submit the copper plate, which would have constituted a powerful, unique evidence in his favour, he steered clear of submitting even a copy of contents of the inscription as found in *Vimarsha*. His avoiding submitting even a copy of the contents of the copper plate would make sense only if the copper plate was totally unavailable to him and there was no expert who had seen the copper plate and could bear testimony to its existence and contents and, consequently, its contents as reported in *Vimarsha* would, if submitted as evidence, have been quite unsubstantiated and challengeable in court as having been cooked up by Sri Rajarajeshvara. Since there is ground to surmise that the copper plate was unavailable even in Sri Madhava Tirtha's time itself, it need not be supposed that the succession-disputes that followed Sri Madhava Tirtha's death had anything to do with its disappearance.

(4) Even by considering just what transpired in the period between the passing away of Sri Madhava Tirtha in 1916 and the installation of Sri Abhinava Sacchidananda Tirtha (of Mulbagal) as the Shankaracharya of Dwaraka in 1945, it can be seen that the copper plate, if indeed it existed, could not have passed on in this period to some separated branch of the Dwaraka Math. This is because while there were succession-disputes in the aforesaid period involving multiple claimants,

nonetheless, there never was any division of the properties of the Math between claimants, nor was the Dwaraka Math (that Sri Madhava Tirtha had presided over) under actual joint occupation at any time.

The legal and other particulars given in the box below demonstrate that there was no division of the Dwaraka Math properties and no actual joint occupation of the Math in the period 1916-1945 AD and, thus, buttress the conclusion that the copper plate could not have landed up in this period in some separated branch of the Dwaraka Math.

Sri Madhava Tirtha, who had been the undisputed Shankaracharya of the Dwaraka Math for about 15 years, died (on 27th September, 1916) without designating anyone to succeed him. The entire property of the Math was promptly placed under the control of the pertinent District Judge (Kennedy). The State of Baroda informed the District Judge (on 16th December 1916) of its authority to appoint the next Shankaracharya, chose Sri Shantyananda Sarasvati as Sri Madhava Tirtha's successor (on 8th May 1917), and he was formally installed as the head of the Dwaraka Math on 5th June, 1917. Sri Shantyananda applied to the District Judge for the property. A person named Purnananda, who had also staked his claim to the District Judge, gave up his claim and the District Judge passed an order (on 9th August 1917) delivering the property to Sri Shantyananda "on the ground that he was the de facto occupant of the gadi {gaddi, seat} and had been installed at Dwaraka and was in possession of the property situate there and subject to the control of the Shankaracharya {quoted from the Judgement of Justice Patkar and Justice Barlee of the Bombay High Court in 'Shri Sharada Peeth Math vs Shri Rajarajeshvarashram on 3 November 1931'}." Another claimant named Rajarajeshvara Ashrama (not the author of *Vimarsha*!), who had staked his claim before the District Judge saying that he was the eldest disciple of Sri Madhava Tirtha, appealed to the Bombay High court against the District Judge's order delivering of the property to Sri Shantyananda; he also sought an injunction against Sri Shantyananda's being designated as Shankaracharya. Chief Justice Scott and Justice Shah did not issue the injunction that this claimant sought but ruled that the property should not be under the control of any claimant until the final determination of the title. Thereafter, as the issue "dragged on for nearly nine years" and as "nothing effective was done till…Shantyanand…died" {quoted from the earlier-mentioned judgement of Justice Patkar and Justice Barlee}, the Math property remained under the control of the Court and Sri Shantyananda continued as the Shankaracharya and the occupant of the Math at Dwaraka till his death on 16th February, 1926. With his death, the case against him by Sri Rajarajeshvara Ashrama, allegedly the eldest disciple of Sri Madhava Tirtha, "abated". What is pertinent with respect to the copper plate is that in the period from the death of Sri Madhava Tirtha in 1916 to the death of Sri Shantyananda in 1926, the Math property was not divided between claimants and was essentially under the control of the court; further, Sri Shantyananda maintained, since his installation as pontiff, the designation of Shankaracharya and was the one who occupied the main Math at Dwaraka. So, the copper plate, if it had existed, could not have passed on to some separated branch Math in this period.

After Sri Shantyannanda's death, Sri Rajarajeshvara, whose case against the former had abated, advanced his claim to the District Judge (Davis) for delivering the Math property to him. While the District Judge ruled in his favour, this decision was promptly challenged by one Svarupananda (not the present pontiff of Dwaraka) "claiming to be the successor of the last Acharya Madhav Tirth {Sri Madhava Tirtha} through one Trivikram Tirthji who was alleged to have been installed as Shankaracharya on 21st June 1917 and was succeeded by Bharati Krishna Tirthji who selected defendant 2 {Sri Svarupananda} to succeed him at Dwarka." The matter went up to the Bombay High court. Chief Justice Marten and Justice Baker ordered that the property should not be handed to either Sri Rajarajeshvara or to Sri Svarupananda until the final determination of the suit. Thereafter, Sri Svarupananda and Sri Rajrajeshvara fought in the courts for the final determination of the title. In the meantime, the High court was informed that the Baroda State had appointed the late Sri Shantyananda's successor (the next Shankaracharya of Dwaraka) on 19th November, 1927. He suffered a setback in the First Class Subordinate Judge's court but went on appeal to the Bombay High court; there, Justice Patkar and Justice Barlee ruled in his favour. About two decades later, Sri Abhinava Sacchidananda Tirtha succeeded him. It is noteworthy that Sri Bharathi Krishna Tirtha (Sri Svarupananda's predecessor, Sri Trivikrama Tirtha's disciple and the Shankaracharya of Puri from 1925-1960) played a positive role in the installation of Sri Abhinava Sacchidananda Tirtha at Dwaraka (*Jagatguru Shankaracharya Shri Bharati Krishna Teertha* by T. G. Pande, 1997, p. 5). In the light of the above account, it can be seen that there was no division of the property between the claimants and no joint occupation of the Math at Dwaraka after the death of Sri Shantyananda and, thus, the copper plate, if it had existed, could not have passed on to some separated branch of the

Dwaraka Math in the period between Sri Shantyananda's death and Sri Abhinava Saccidananda Tirtha's installation at Dwaraka.

(5) After the firm establishment of Sri Abhinava Sacchidananda Tirtha (who headed the Mulbagal Math) as the Shankaracharya of Dwaraka, there is no separate Mulbagal line of preceptors and there have been no succession disputes in the Dwaraka Math. So, there is no scope to conceive that the copper plate, if at all it had ever existed, landed up after that in some separated branch of the Dwaraka Math and has been lying unnoticed there.

(Sri Sunil Bhattacharyaji has written:)
Thirdly, the state of the dating of the ancient inscriptions in India will improve only after the historians give up their faithfulness to the AIT time-line framed by Max Muller.

Response

Without expressing any opinion on this topic and confining ourselves to just our article, all that we would like to point out is that '*Yudhishthira-shaka* 2663' (the date inscribed on the copper plate according to the author of *Vimarsha*) was equated to 476 BC in keeping with the author of *Vimarsha*, the sole source of information about the copper plate, deeming that the *Kaliyuga* started in 3101(+1) BC and the *Yudhishitira-era* in 3128(+1) BC (vide *Vimarsha* p. 22-23).